‘Yet’:
A Story of Triumph Over Childhood Separation,
Trauma, and Disability

Who Do I Think You Were?®

‘Yet’:
A Story of Triumph Over Childhood Separation, Trauma, and Disability

Helen Parker-Drabble

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Fresh air treatment at King Edward VII Memorial Hospital for Crippled Children, *c.* 1920–1939. Licensed from ©Picture Sheffield (Image s07418).

A staged photo showing some boys in bed on the veranda and other boys standing in a plaster Thomas splint. Licensed from ©Picture Sheffield (Image w00567).

Harry Drabble, 1935.

Harry Drabble aged 20, 1955.

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This book is dedicated to
Harry Drabble, 1934–2022,
son, brother, husband, father, friend, uncle, grandfather,
teacher and mentor.

In memory of Michael Grimsley (1944–2023) who spent his childhood similarly, but who would rarely speak about it.

Joseph (Joe) Mulryan (1912–1999) was diagnosed with a TB hip and went to King Edward's isolation hospital aged 6. He was an inpatient for one year and treated with traction and crutches with calipers. His mum walked two-and-a-half hours each way once a month to visit him. Joe returned home only to relapse and then spent further time in Loxley House.

Brian John Tringham, (1910–1998). Spent several months in 1924 at the Orthopaedic Hospital, Oswestry (partly in traction) following a hip reconstruction performed by Mr (later Sir) Robert Jones. Brian had no family nearby. He was taught to knit – but there was not much alternative therapy. He retained a life-long gratitude to Sir Robert and contributed to his memorial fund when Sir Robert died.

Neil Anderson – baptised the day war broke out at Sheffield Cathedral (3 September 1939), died 25 April 1941 at City General Hospital, in isolation with chronic pneumonia.

Haydn Anderson – in isolation at Lodge Moor with suspected pneumonia. Survived. Now 89 years old.

Derek Godbehere
Brian Oxley
Dorothy Stocks
Brian Tringham
Laura Newson
Margaret Watson
Barbara Smith
Peter Ashmore
Joyce Moore
Jean Lawrence
John William Harrington
Audrey Newheiser
Grace Rachel Bird
Winifred Holling 1931–2021
Eileen Margaret Richards
1935–2020
Ernest Green (1935–2020)

Florence Cadman
Doreen Cadman
Grace Rachel Bird
Maura Armitage
Marcia Clark
Margaret Kelly
John Lindley
Valerie Hanwell
Sheila Newheiser
Bob Shaw
Betty Wylie
Margaret Ena Curbishley
Mark Gatenby
Ernest Green
Robert (Bob) Goodison
Terence (Terry) Fowler

and to the countless children and their families who didn't have a voice during this traumatic period of English history.

Do not weep for me, for I have lived.
Harry Drabble 2022

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Why Share Dad's Story?

Author's note: Please be aware that I use outdated, but once commonly used language, such as 'cripple', 'disabled', and 'patient', in relation to people with a disability in this book. While the former has particularly derogatory connotations, they were all of their time and my father used them to describe himself. Using these terms does not reflect my views.

No one believed me.
'Children couldn't have been treated like that.' But we were.

When I was around seven years old, I was fascinated by my father's early experiences and naively tried to talk him into writing a book. I did not understand why he flinched at my suggestion. As I grew older, Dad told me, 'When I was two, society wrote me off as a "cripple" incapable of learning. One who should be kept away from "normal" people.'

It was important to Dad to share his life lessons with people. One trick, in particular, helped him move forward when everything looked impossible. He found that if he added the word 'yet', when he started berating himself about something he couldn't do, it

reminded him that change and learning is a process. He said this took the pressure off him so that he could work out the steps he needed to take to get from 'can't do' to 'can do'. It saddened him to realise how many limitations we place on ourselves, and he was frustrated he could not help more people to overcome obstacles and achieve their definition of success. However, he took many of the skills he learnt as a child into his adult life as a manager and as a music teacher working from home for 35 years. After he died, people who knew him sought me out to tell me he had helped them to think differently about whatever had challenged them, and how this had changed their lives for the better. One student, James, said that Dad's 'endless patience and enthusiasm was infectious. I was pushed where needed and supported when I was struggling. They say a good teacher stays with you for life and I am pleased to say that Mr Drabble proves this rule.' Another, Vicky, described him as 'a truly amazing man [who] had a significant impact on my life and direction of travel'.

With Dad's knowledge, over the last 20 years of his life, I jotted down the snippets he told me. As an adult, I tried not to prod his 'demons' to satisfy my curiosity, but I listened to him when they prodded him. In his last years, I gently quizzed him more about the family. He generously dug deep to answer as clearly as he could. We discussed my article 'How Key Psychological Theories Can Enrich Our Understanding of Our Ancestors', which covered three generations of our family, including my mother.[1] He read it carefully and approved it before I submitted it for peer review. I was deeply moved when he told me the psychological aspects that I bring to my writing are 'perhaps, the most important perspective

of all'. He said he was sorry he'd stopped following developments in psychology to concentrate on his role as a provider. I told him that it was in his bookcases that I discovered psychology. I still have the books he loaned to me when I started studying psychology A level.

As Dad's kidneys slowly failed, I watched helplessly as he cut the tethers that bound him to events, activities, people and living. Dad believed 'the unexamined life is not worth living', but his conclusions had often been private ones that fed into personal biannual and annual plans. Towards the end of his life, particularly during the nearly two years he lived through the COVID-19 pandemic, he shared a lot, restating and reflecting on the experiences that shaped him. He said he was deeply grateful for contracting bovine tuberculosis (bTB), recognising that if he hadn't had the experiences that followed, his life would have been impoverished. He thanked me for the research findings that put his experiences into perspective and for giving him the opportunity to finally bury his demons. I explained, 'Very few accounts of survivors of bovine tuberculosis exist. That makes yours an important story.'[2] Years ago, I'd said that if he didn't write his story I would, but I later checked with him, 'Would you rather I didn't write about your life?' He replied, 'No, experiences are an important part of history, but that doesn't mean I want to be the one to write about mine.'

After a consultant gave him three months to live in February 2022, Dad decided he wanted to collaborate on the project. We talked about its format, whether it should perhaps be a fictionalised tale, or an anonymised biography. He suggested that, as a collaboration, its effectiveness would lie in combining his words and experience

with historical and current psychological theory. Given his need to conserve his energy, I left it to him to drive the pace and to choose what he wanted to talk about. A favourite saying of Dad's was, 'Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forward' (Soren Aabye Kierkegaard, 1813–55). This book is the culmination of the experiences, memories, feelings and thoughts he shared. It is my attempt to share his life as he lived it.

He came to realise his story could represent the hidden, unbelievable truth of hundreds of thousands of British children who had been disabled by bovine TB and that it could raise awareness of the psychological price paid by these children (and their descendants) when their psychological needs were not recognised, or were misunderstood.

Dad knew that tuberculosis is not only increasing worldwide but also becoming drug resistant, and he thought that mistakes in the way children were treated may be repeated. He said, 'Maybe my story will help someone.' After Dad read some early chapters and extracts, just before he died, I checked in with him again, 'I don't have to share what I have written with the family, or publish it. It's been enough for me to share this experience with you.' He replied, 'Publish.'

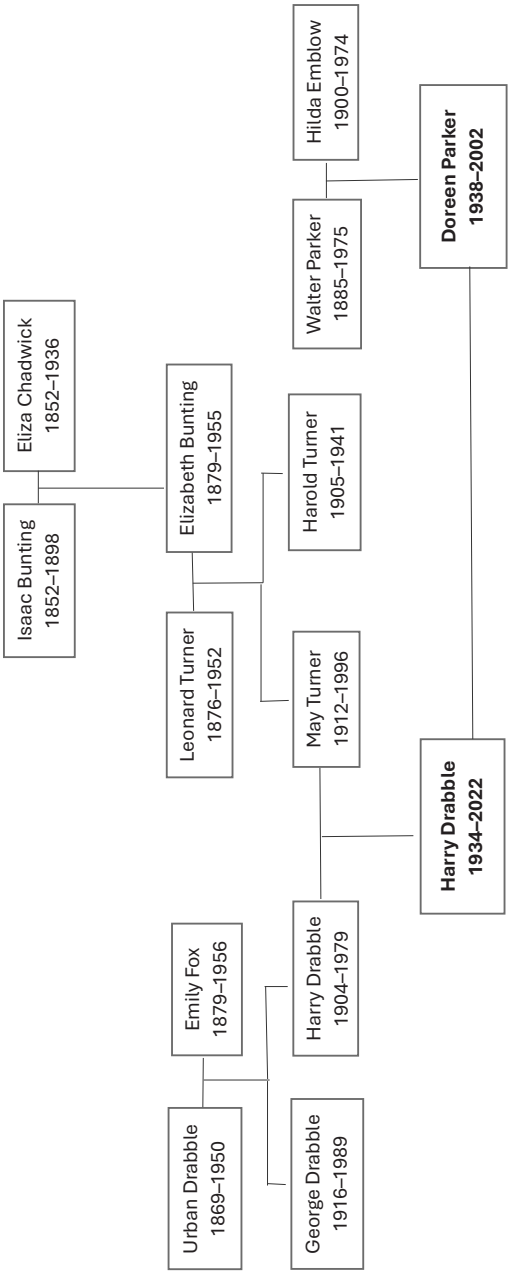
As Tara Westover, the author of the exceptional and astute memoir *Educated*, reminds us, 'We are all of us more complicated than the roles we are assigned in the stories other people tell.'[3] I can't tell you of all Dad's many layers in this book, but I can say I saw him as a remarkable, gentle, loving and non-judgemental man. It grieves me enormously he did not live to comment on this final version. I take comfort in one of the last things he said to me, 'You

have an exceptional understanding and I trust you with my life.' I am tremendously proud of him.

Helen
2025

PS Around four million new book titles are published each year, and reviews (especially on Amazon) are one of the few ways independent authors can be discovered. If you read *Who Do I Think You Were?*® *'Yet': A Story of Triumph Over Childhood Separation, Trauma, and Disability*, I would be grateful if you left a review on Amazon, GoodReads or at your favourite store.

The Drabble/Parker Family Tree



PART ONE

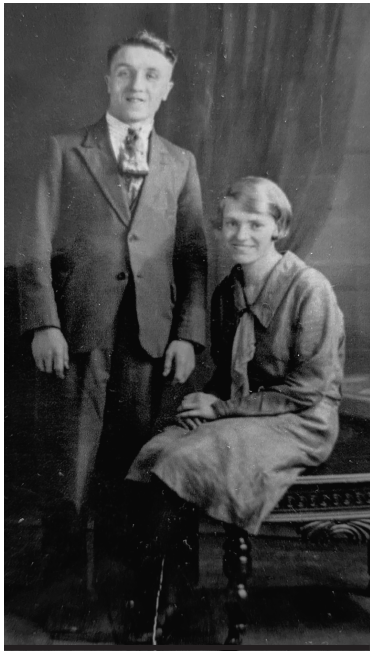
Timeline

DATE	AGE	EVENT
4 Dec. 1934		Born at the Jessop Hospital for Women, Sheffield
23 Dec. 1934	3 weeks	Baptised Heeley Parish Church, Heeley, Sheffield
24 Dec. 1934	3 weeks	Moved to 44 Butterthwaite Road, Shiregreen Estate, Sheffield
22 June 1935	6 mths	Harry wins Heeley Parish Church baby competition
Summer 1935	6 mths	Holiday in a sidecar on the tandem to Betws-y-Coed, Wales
c. July 1937	2.5	Outpatient appointment Westfield Terrace, Royal Hospital, Sheffield
c. July 1937	2.5	Admitted to the nursery ward, Royal Hospital, Sheffield
19 July 1937	2.5	Admitted to King Edward VII Memorial Hospital for Crippled Children, Rivelin

1

A Life-changing Diagnosis

Harry was born in the Jessop Hospital for Women on the corner of Gell Street and Leavygreave Road, near Sheffield City Centre, on 4 December 1934. The hospital was two miles from the room his parents shared in his maternal great-grandmother's house in the suburb of Heeley.



Studio photo of May Turner and Harry Drabble on their wedding day 15 April 1933.

His mother, May, had been keen to start a family as soon as she married. However, she knew nothing about contraception, and Harry Senior did not want to become a father quickly. He later admitted to her he had used condoms bought from the barbers to stop her from conceiving. Reminiscing with me in the late 1970s, May reflected that her ignorance as a young woman, which included basic information about men's and women's bodies, was not unusual. She told me she did not see a completely nude male until her son was born.

Childbirth was still risky, but despite 45 out of 1,000 women dying in childbirth, and Harry's initial reluctance, a year after their marriage, the couple were eagerly anticipating the birth of their first child.[4] It is unlikely May attended antenatal appointments. Nationwide, half of women expecting babies did not, although 4,264 did so in Sheffield in 1934.[5] Unlike many of her friends, family and neighbours, May continued in domestic service after she married, and worked until just before Harry was due.[6]

May thought herself fortunate to occupy one of the 165 maternity beds in 'the Jessop', as it could only accommodate a quarter of Sheffield's expectant mothers.[7] She said she did not know how Harry would be born until she was in the delivery room and a midwife told her, 'The baby comes out the same way they got in.' May added, 'I thought they would unzip my tummy.'[8] She also told me a story of how the delivery nurse had labelled Harry wrongly when he had been taken from her after birth so he could be checked over. Apparently, when May was handed an infant to feed, despite her usual deference, she insisted the baby handed to her was not hers. The nurse tried to reassure her that this was her child, but May would not take the baby. The ward sister heard what May had to say, and bustled off. After a hasty investigation, a swap took place.

According to a midwife's account, the swaddled babies slept in a metal cot hung on the rail at the bottom of their mother's bed.[9] The mothers were confined to bed during their two-week stay. When a baby cried, a midwife 'tore down the ward, comforted the child, reassured the mother and put the baby back down … It was detached in a way … the baby became the nurse's concern rather

than the mother's.'[10] The mothers were given their babies to breast-feed as close to 6 am, 10 am, 2 pm, 6 pm and 10 pm as possible.

While May was in hospital, Osborn Steelworks gave Harry Senior the rise in responsibility and pay that was traditional at the time for men entering fatherhood. His new wage gave him the opportunity to apply for one of the many new council houses built by Sheffield Corporation. So, clutching his payslips to prove he was a reliable worker in steady, respectable employment and could afford the rent, Harry spent a night queuing outside Sheffield Town Hall in the hope of a new home for his new family.[11]

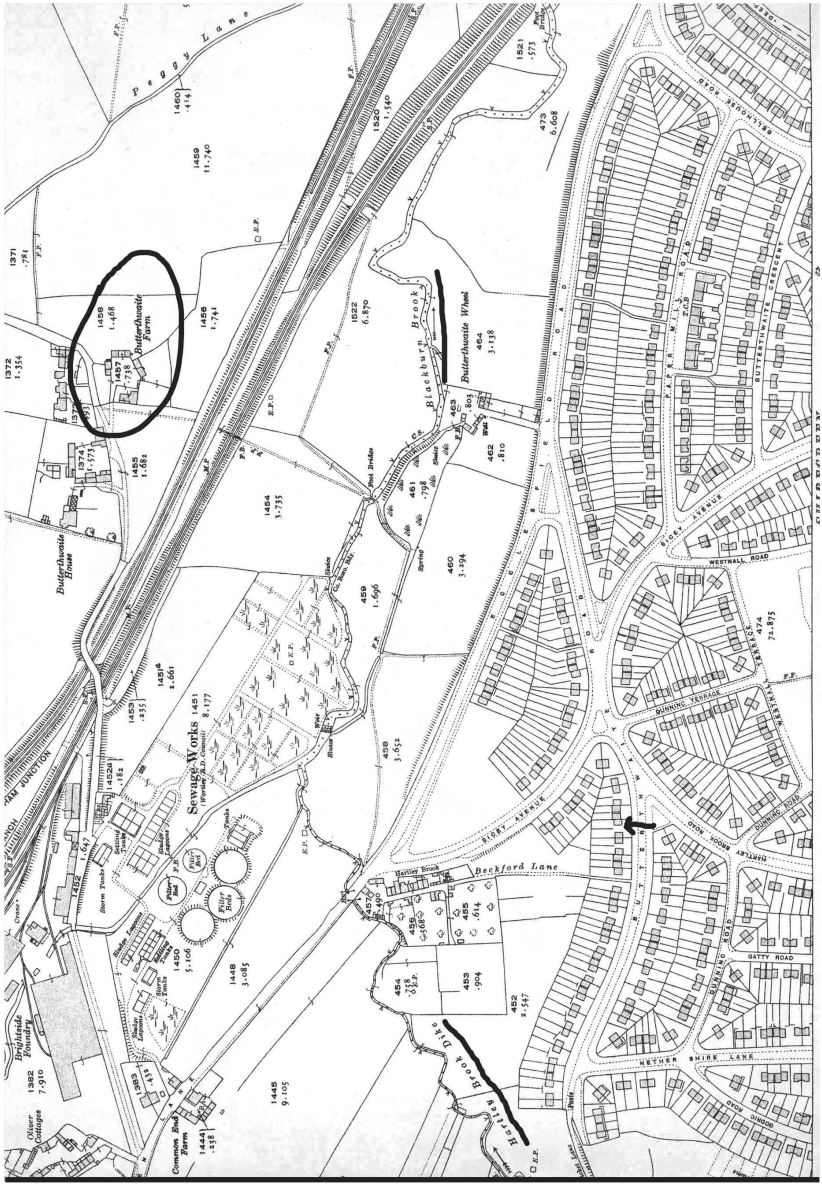
As they were still living in Heeley, Harry was baptised at the parish church on 23 December 1934.

Heeley Parish Church, Gleadless Road, Heeley, Sheffield.
Photograph by Terry Robinson.This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic licence.

The council granted Harry Senior a new three-bedroom council house on the Shiregreen estate on the north-east fringe of Sheffield, close to open fields, Butterthwaite Farm, Blackburn Brook and Hartley Brook Dike. The house was one of 4,472 built on this estate alone. Harry said:

Shiregreen was a desirable estate. When we moved in, it was a model estate and the people in it had to have a minimum standard of earnings and education to be allowed to live there.

44 Butterthwaite Road is the house on the left.
2024 ©Google



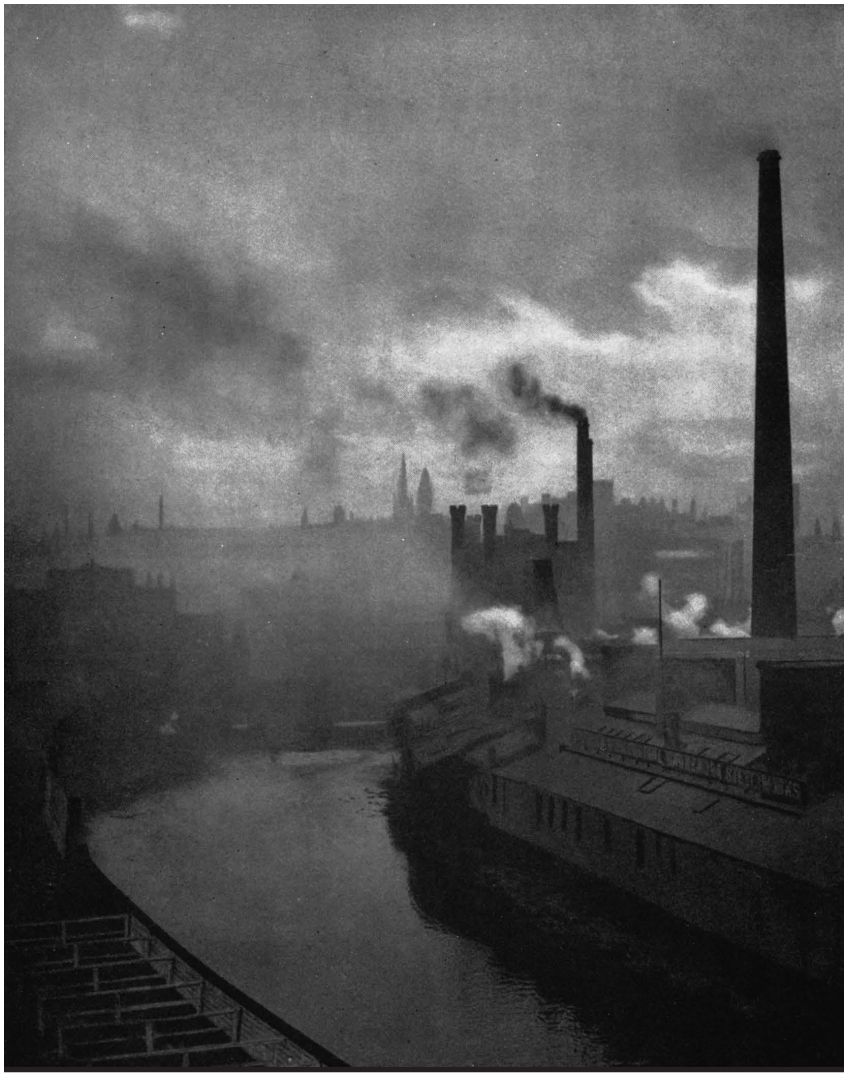
Map of Shiregreen estate showing Harry's house, the nearby brook, dike and Butterthwaite Farm.[12]

On Christmas Eve 1934, May and Harry were thrilled to move with their three-week-old son to their new house at 44 Butterthwaite Road. It had an upstairs bathroom, a downstairs toilet and a garden to soothe Harry after his gruelling shifts in the steelworks. Their new home was quite a step up. Harry Senior had lived with four siblings in a two-up two-down with an outside toilet at 71 Wallace Road, Neepsend. Here he had slept alongside his two brothers on the front-room floor, where, due to lack of space, he lay with his head under the sideboard. May's wedding certificate noted she lived at 155 Wallace Road when they married, presumably with her parents.

In 1936, referring to Sheffield, author George Orwell wrote in his diary: 'It seems to me, by daylight, one of the most appalling places I have ever seen.' He went on: 'In whichever direction you look you see the same landscape of monstrous chimneys pouring forth smoke which is sometimes black and sometimes of a rosy tint said to be due to sulphur.'[13]

Orwell stayed with Kate and Gilbert Searle at 154 Wallace Road, on the hill opposite the gasworks, from 2–4 March 1936. He described Wallace Road and Neepsend in his book *The Road to Wigan Pier*.[14] It shocked the nation.

> One particular picture of Sheffield stays by me. A frightful piece of waste ground … trampled quite bare of grass and littered with newspaper, old saucepans etc. To the right, an isolated row of gaunt four-room houses, dark red, blackened by smoke. To the left an interminable vista of factory chimneys, chimney behind chimney, fading away into a dim blackish haze.[15]



'Where The Shells Came From' (Sheffield), *c.* 1927.
By artist Reginald Belfield.
In the public domain.

Born later, into a different class, May might have taken the 11-plus exam, and gone to grammar school, even university. However, her father Leonard held a common view at the time, 'It's not worth

educating girls.' (More about Leonard can be found at Appendix D.) Instead, like so many of her peers, she went into domestic service when she left school at the age of 14. Her time as a general live-in servant included washing and ironing for a Jewish family with at least two daughters. May said it was hard work, but her employers encouraged her curiosity about food and household management, and allowed her to take time off for singing and elocution lessons. May told me she was happy in the detached house in Fulwood with its large garden.

Harry's parents met on a steam train when May was travelling with her father to fish at Bardney. Harry Senior loved steam engines. He noted when they sped up and slowed down and took every opportunity to ask the driver questions. At the end of the journey, May noticed how easily he struck up a conversation and watched him thank the train driver. She later told me: 'Everyone talked to him. I think it's because he always looked them in the eye.' The couple married in 1933 just before May's 21st birthday.

Since her marriage, life had improved enormously for May, Harry's slim, blonde and petite mother. She had been a malnourished, underweight child who, while at the beck and call of her demanding alcoholic parents, dreamed of bread dipped into a can of condensed milk. Growing up, May had the tricky job of extracting her father, Leonard, from the pub.[16] When she could, she escaped to her grandmother Eliza's house. Harry described May's grandmother as 'a religious woman, and deeply superstitious'.

May told me she rejected her own chaotic parenting and kept to the steady routine from the maternity ward, putting Harry to sleep, feeding him and bathing him by the clock. She added that

Eliza became her role model for motherhood. But May was also an avid reader with a hunger for knowledge, so she may have collected the coupons and sent away for *The Motherhood Book* offered by the *Daily Independent*. This also recommended feeding by the clock, but said three hourly during the day was best, 'with babies over 5lb in weight being given only boiled water during the hours of true darkness'.[17] *The Motherhood Book* also told mothers 'too much handling stimulates the nerves and leads to wakefulness'.[18] It further advised that 'mothering time should be the most delightful hour of the day' and is 'the most permissible time for the mother … to take her little one gently in her arms and indulge in simple mother-play'.[19] Did May take such prescriptive advice to heart, or did she trust her instincts?

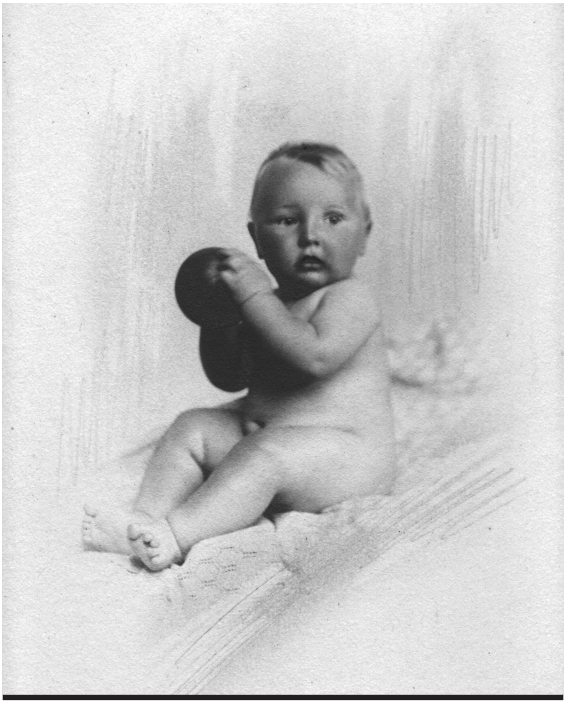
May Turner with her grandmother Eliza Bunting, née Chadwick.

If May had read further, she might have discovered that bovine tuberculosis can result from drinking infected milk. Unfortunately, it said nothing about boiling the milk before giving it to babies and toddlers.[20]

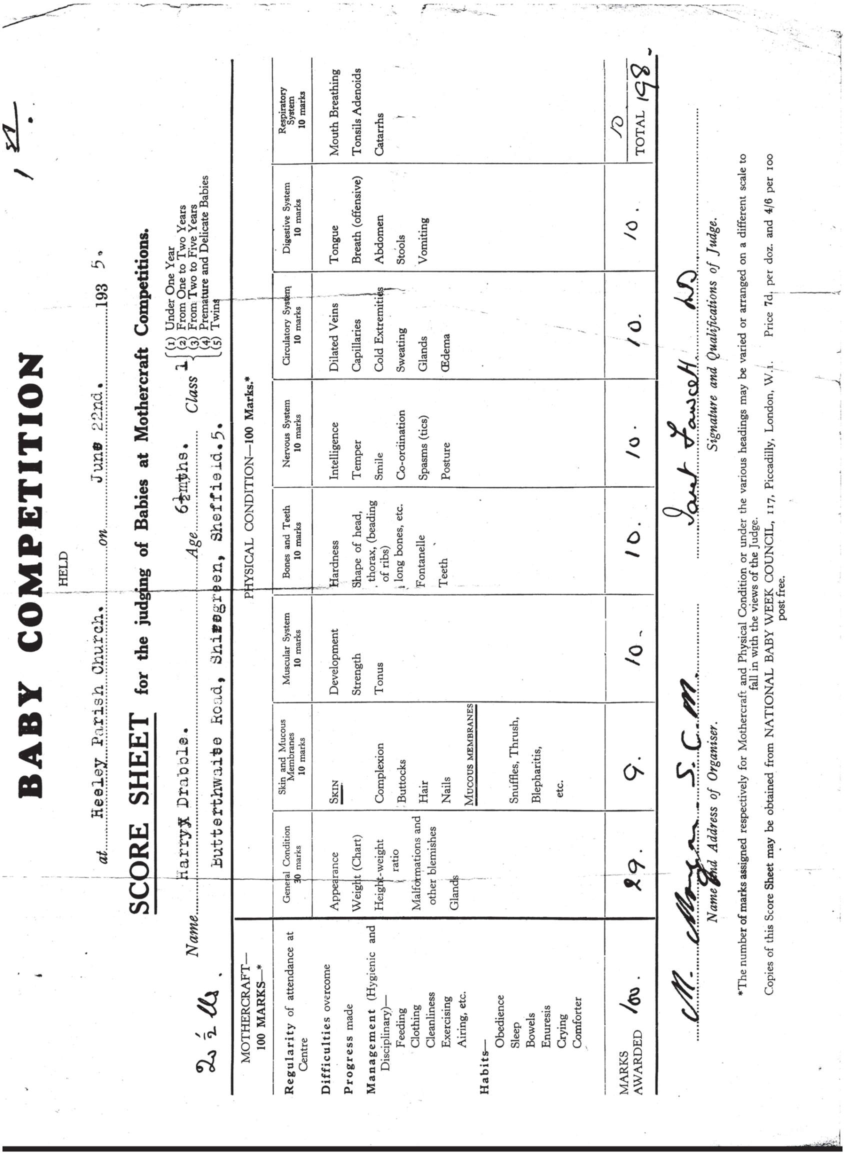
Osborn Steelworks employed Harry Senior as an assistant roller.[21] Affectionately nicknamed 'Bud' by his colleagues because of his short stature, Harry Senior had an easy manner that people from all walks of life

warmed to. In contrast, May did not feel she should go into department stores because, 'they weren't for the likes of me'.[22]

At six months old, Harry was a bubbling, blond, blue-eyed infant. He was quick to chuckle and curious about his surroundings. In the summer of 1935, his proud mother entered him into the Heeley Parish Church Baby Competition in Sheffield, where the doctor acting as judge awarded him 98 points out of a possible 100. May was elated. He won the first prize of a studio photograph which she hung in their living room.



Studio portrait of Harry Drabble, aged seven months, 1935.
The photograph was part of the first prize in Heeley Parish Church Baby Competition, and was taken by Yates & Henderson, 35 Fargate, Sheffield.
In the author's collection.



1 st.

BABY COMPETITION

HELD at Heeley Parish Church. on June 22nd. 1935.

SCORE SHEET for the judging of Babies at Mothercraft Competitions.

Name Harry Drabble. Age 6½ mths. Class 1 {(1) Under One Year (2) From One to Two Years (3) From Two to Five Years (4) Premature and Delicate Babies (5) Twins

Butterthwaite Road, Shiregreen, Sheffield.5.

2½ lb.

MOTHERCRAFT—100 MARKS—*	PHYSICAL CONDITION—100 Marks.*							
	General Condition 30 marks	Skin and Mucous Membranes 10 marks	Muscular System 10 marks	Bones and Teeth 10 marks	Nervous System 10 marks	Circulatory System 10 marks	Digestive System 10 marks	Respiratory System 10 marks
Regularity of attendance at Centre **Difficulties** overcome **Progress** made **Management** (Hygienic and Disciplinary)— Feeding Clothing Cleanliness Exercising Airing, etc. **Habits**— Obedience Sleep Bowels Enuresis Crying Comforter	Appearance Weight (Chart) Height-weight ratio Malformations and other blemishes Glands	SKIN Complexion Buttocks Hair Nails MUCOUS MEMBRANES Snuffles, Thrush, Blepharitis, etc.	Development Strength Tonus	Hardness Shape of head, thorax, (beading of ribs) long bones, etc. Fontanelle Teeth	Intelligence Temper Smile Co-ordination Spasms (tics) Posture	Dilated Veins Capillaries Cold Extremities Sweating Glands Œdema	Tongue Breath (offensive) Abdomen Stools Vomiting	Mouth Breathing Tonsils Adenoids Catarrhs
MARKS AWARDED 100.	29.	9.	10.	10.	10.	10.	10.	10 TOTAL 198.

M. Morgan S.C.M.
Name and Address of Organiser.

Janet Fawcett M.D.
Signature and Qualifications of Judge.

*The number **of marks assigned** respectively for Mothercraft and Physical Condition or under the various headings may be varied or arranged on a different scale to fall in with the views of the Judge.

Copies of this Score **Sheet may** be obtained from NATIONAL BABY WEEK COUNCIL, 117, Piccadilly, London, W.1. Price **7d.** per doz. and **4/6** per 100 post free.

Heeley Parish Church Baby Competition score sheet, 22 June 1935.
In the author’s collection.

Harry and May had bought a tandem before they married and they would often cycle 100 miles or more at the weekend. Harry Senior had a good working knowledge of England and Wales gleaned from a cycling map.

ABOVE: May Drabble, née Turner, with the couple's tandem, *c.* 1933.

Images in the author's collection.

LEFT: Front cover of the reduced survey British Isles coloured Tourists and Cyclists 1921 map.[23]

Harry was also good at map reading, but more importantly, as his son said later in life, 'Dad had an instinctive sense of space. He always knew where he was.'

As a baby, Harry travelled with his parents in an adapted sidecar attached to the tandem, so they could continue exploring the countryside. Shortly after the baby competition, Harry and

May slung on their knapsacks, and cycled 150 miles to Betws-y-Coed, near Snowdon in North Wales. They took in Chester Castle, cycled along the River Dee and visited Swallow and Conwy Falls. Numerous day trips followed, when her husband came home from a long shift and would say to May, 'Let's get lost tomorrow.'

Harry Drabble, aged about 18 months old, in a bright red metal car. The photo is believed to have been taken in the back garden of 44 Butterthwaite Road. *In the author's collection.*

May loved life with her family and was reluctant to disturb it when her son started limping. She hoped it would right itself, but May's father, Leonard, who had a 'gammy' leg, told her, 'That limp needs looking at.' Harry Senior gave her the money to take their infant to a doctor, who referred him to an orthopaedic surgeon, and the surgical tuberculosis officer for Sheffield, Dr Creswell Lee Pattison. Paediatric consultants were not introduced until the National Health Service began in 1948.

May was worried when she took Harry to the outpatient appointment clinic at the Royal Hospital, Sheffield in July 1937. After Dr Pattison examined him, the close relationship Harry enjoyed with his parents was shattered when a nurse pulled young Harry from his mother's arms. In an interview, a nurse who, as a patient in another hospital, had been separated from her parents when she was six years old in 1948 considered that 'children were forcibly removed from the parents in a manner which was not necessary and which was designed to distress both parties'.[24] And later, as a nurse in 1960, she recalled: 'So this toddler that by now was distraught, sobbing, I went to pick him up, because he was just, he was just left on the cot to break his heart and sob, so I went to pick him up and just as I did, he was like a little monkey, his arms around me … I'm going to get upset again hanging to me. It was awful. And so the good children's nurse came and put a harness on him and fastened him down … it was awful. I think, one of the worst things and he was just left to get on with it. And I don't know why …'[25] When she was interviewed, she said she 'felt that the children's nurses wanted to exert power over children, parents and other nurses and that this partially explained their lack of "human" care'.[26]

Harry was admitted to the Royal Hospital's nursery ward for tests. He was just two-and-a-half years old. May was distraught. Powerless, she was forced to return home and explain to her husband that she had left their child at the hospital. Harry later described the 'white-hot fury' when he was taken from his mother as 'someone is going to pay'.

Facade of 20 Westfield Terrace, which served as the outpatients' department for the Royal Hospital. *By Warofdreams – Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported licence.*

Image of the outpatients' area, taken from the film *Centenary of the Royal Hospital Sheffield, 1932*, Wellcome Collection.[27] *In the public domain.*

Child orthopaedic appointment with a surgeon and a mother anxiously looking on. *The images on this page were taken from a 1932 film about the Royal Hospital, Sheffield.*

Nursery ward. Image taken from a 1932 film about the Royal Hospital, Sheffield. The Royal Hospital, which sourced their milk from a single Derbyshire farm. The milk was regularly tested for organisms that caused disease.

A child eating in their cot on the nursery ward.

Dr Pattison was also the medical superintendent of the King Edward VII Hospital for Crippled Children. (More about the hospital can be found at Appendix B.) He gave May the shattering

diagnosis that Harry had been infected with *Mycobacterium bovis* (*M. Bovis*), commonly known as bovine TB, bTB or non-pulmonary tuberculosis. It is a chronic disease of mammals, particularly cattle, but can be transmitted to people. It was identified in 1898 after Robert Koch discovered the tubercle bacillus caused tuberculosis in 1881. Bovine TB can affect the lungs, lymph nodes and other parts of the body, particularly the joints. People are usually infected by eating or drinking contaminated, unpasteurised dairy products, as was infant Harry, or, more rarely, by eating infected meat.

The bacteria *Mycobacterium bovis* can lie dormant or take months or years to develop. However, within eight weeks after infection, some bovine TB symptoms include 'fever, sore throat, swelling of the tonsils and cervical lymph nodes, and vague stomach symptoms'.[28] The most important indicators in children were stiffness and, initally, an intermittent limp, particularly in the morning or after resting. The limp was caused by restricted movement and, later, by pain around the hip region. (You can read more about bovine TB in Appendix A.)

In 1934, the year Harry was born, the *Sheffield Independent* reported: 'There were not fewer than 4,000 fresh cases of tuberculosis bovine origin occurring every year in England and Wales, and about 2,000 deaths.'[29]

Dr Pattison informed May that he would admit Harry for treatment, provided she and Harry Senior signed him over for the necessary time. Devastated, May and Harry agreed their son should be transferred to the King Edward VII Memorial Hopsital for Crippled Children by ambulance. It was seven miles from home, and the first time the toddler had been in such a small motor vehicle or

travelled without a parent. His mother was not allowed to follow on. May could only wait helplessly until her husband received a postcard giving one parent permission to visit. The separation was agonising. For months after Harry's admission, May would wake believing she heard him crying.

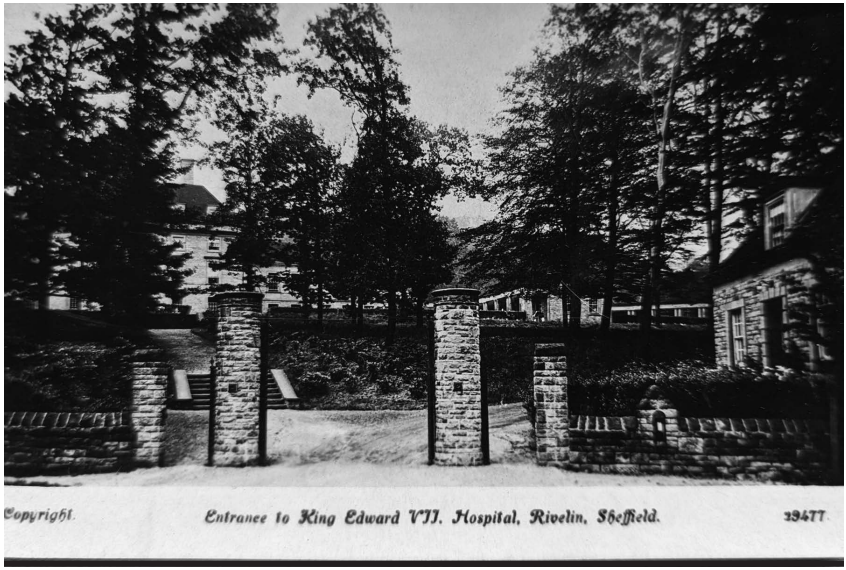
Society permitted professionals significant control over children's care and told parents that doctors and nurses 'knew best'. May and Harry were powerless. Their young son had entered a system where emotional support for children and parents was not available. Parents were excluded from hospitals and their child's care. The couple had to trust that doctors and nurses possessed the medical knowledge required to treat and care for Harry, and accept their clinical objectivity and detachment. In the absence of information from the medical staff, did May turn to *The Motherhood Book* and discover that bovine tuberculosis was as serious as consumption (pulmonary tuberculosis), and 'a complete recovery of movement in the joint [was] not likely to occur. In any case, treatment [would] last for two years and often considerably more'?[30]

Harry's six-month-old self had been prizeworthy. Two years later, he was a child with a disability, being hidden out of sight.

The middle ambulance is the type Harry remembered as a child. *Image taken from a 1932 film about the Royal Hospital, Sheffield.*

In Sheffield, the Hospital Council brokered an amalgamation of the ambulance services of the voluntary hospitals, the municipal hospitals (mainly isolation institutions) and the City Watch Committee, whose vehicles were used for street accidents.

This joint working was underpinned by the provision of St John's first-aid volunteers, who managed patients during their transport, with women providing the bulk of the support.[31]



King Edward VII Memorial Hospital for Crippled Children, Rivelin, *c.* 1921, postcard. *In the author's collection.*

2

Medical Treatment

Being admitted to the babies' quarantine ward at the King Edward VII Memorial Hospital for Crippled Children, in the Rivelin Valley, Sheffield in July 1937 was likely a bewildering and terrifying experience for two-and-a-half-year-old Harry.[32] At home, he had loved kicking a ball in the garden. In the hospital, he was strapped down in one of the two steel cots in the observation ward, without even a soft toy or familiar blanket. Both of these were deemed to be an infection risk, which could close a ward or even the entire hospital.[33] Harry was still in pain, but had no one to soothe him. He would come to refer to the hospital as 'Rivelin'.

Aerial photograph of the King Edward VII Orthopaedic Hospital in the Rivelin Valley.[34] *Photograph from an archive compiled by Jean Bruce, 'King Edwards collected 2008–2018'.*

The hospital was one of 40 orthopaedic hospitals in Britain.[35] It was largely funded by the 'Penny in the Pound' scheme, a city-wide

contributory scheme, which involved workmen like Harry Senior pledging 1 penny out of every pound earned to the hospital fund.[36]

Harry vividly recalled the traumatic memory of being separated from his mother. In his mind's eye, he could see a 'child-friendly' clock on the children's ward as he lay in his iron-barred cot. He focused intently on the black metal silhouette of a girl and boy dancing either side of its face, because a nurse had pointed to it and said, '"When that figure gets round to there, your mother will come." Of course, she never did.' The betrayal Harry experienced when the hands lined up and his mother did not appear was acute. He said it taught him that people are unreliable, but added, 'Everyone has experiences like that.'

Once Harry's quarantine was over, he was moved to the babies' ward. The wards were all-white. There were no pictures on the wall, no books, no toys, no lessons and no radio. Besides bovine tuberculosis, the hospital treated congenital deformities, rickets and paralysis from polio. With patients taken outside for open-air treatment, the establishment acted as a sanatorium as well as an orthopaedic hospital.

Harry with his father Harry Senior in the fresh air at the King Edward VII Memorial Hospital for Crippled Children, *c.* 1937.
In the author's collection.

Dr Pattison ruled out Perthes' disease (a childhood hip disorder initiated by a disruption of blood flow to the head of the femur that causes the bone to die, stopping growth), and then confirmed Harry's diagnosis of bovine TB after taking a history, viewing his X-rays, examining his swollen and stiff joints, and carrying out a painful bone biopsy and a lumbar puncture to see if the disease had spread to his spine. However, orthopaedic surgeon Maud Forrester-Brown wrote that a definitive diagnosis could only be made when it was known how long the joint should be kept still before the symptoms started again. She added that even when treatment started early, there were no guarantees that the child could use their joint in the future.[37]

Maud Frances Forrester-Brown (1885–1970) was an author and the first woman orthopaedic surgeon in Britain. She was a visiting surgeon to children's clinics across the South-West of England, performing hundreds of operations. In 1921, she became the first female member of the British Orthopaedic Association. She rose to vice-president of the Orthopaedics section of the British Medical Association in 1938.[38] Maud was not the only female orthopaedic surgeon. In 1937, the Rivelin's house surgeon was Kathleen Shannon.[39]

The diagnosis of bovine TB was devastating for Harry's parents. They are unlikely to have known that 23 children aged 10 years or younger died in Sheffield of bone and joint tuberculosis that year.[40] What they did know was that society would largely write off their little boy once he was admitted to the hospital, because work opportunities mostly depended on working-class men being strong and physically able. They were helpless to protect Harry once he had been admitted.[41] May and Harry also knew that those with physical disabilities were strongly discouraged from marrying or

having children of their own. Despite bovine tuberculosis not being infectious in the same way as pulmonary tuberculosis, 'the stigma attached to the disease itself meant sanitorium staff were regarded with caution outside the hospital gates'.[42]

Treating tuberculosis of the spine, hip and other joints was difficult and painstakingly slow, involving immobilisation for many months, or even years of hospitalisation. The inflammatory process of bovine TB rapidly destroyed large areas of children's soft bone.[43] It would destroy Harry's left hip socket, the neck of the femur, and his right elbow. The articular cartilage that covered the ends of the joint in his left hip and his right elbow would also be demolished. New bone is not created in tuberculosis as it can be with fractures, arthritis, or other conditions. Over time, the shaft of the femur was forced into the space where the socket had been, which shortened his left leg. Some of the hip damage and dislocation could have been caused by infant Harry putting weight on the inflamed joint before the condition was diagnosed.[44]

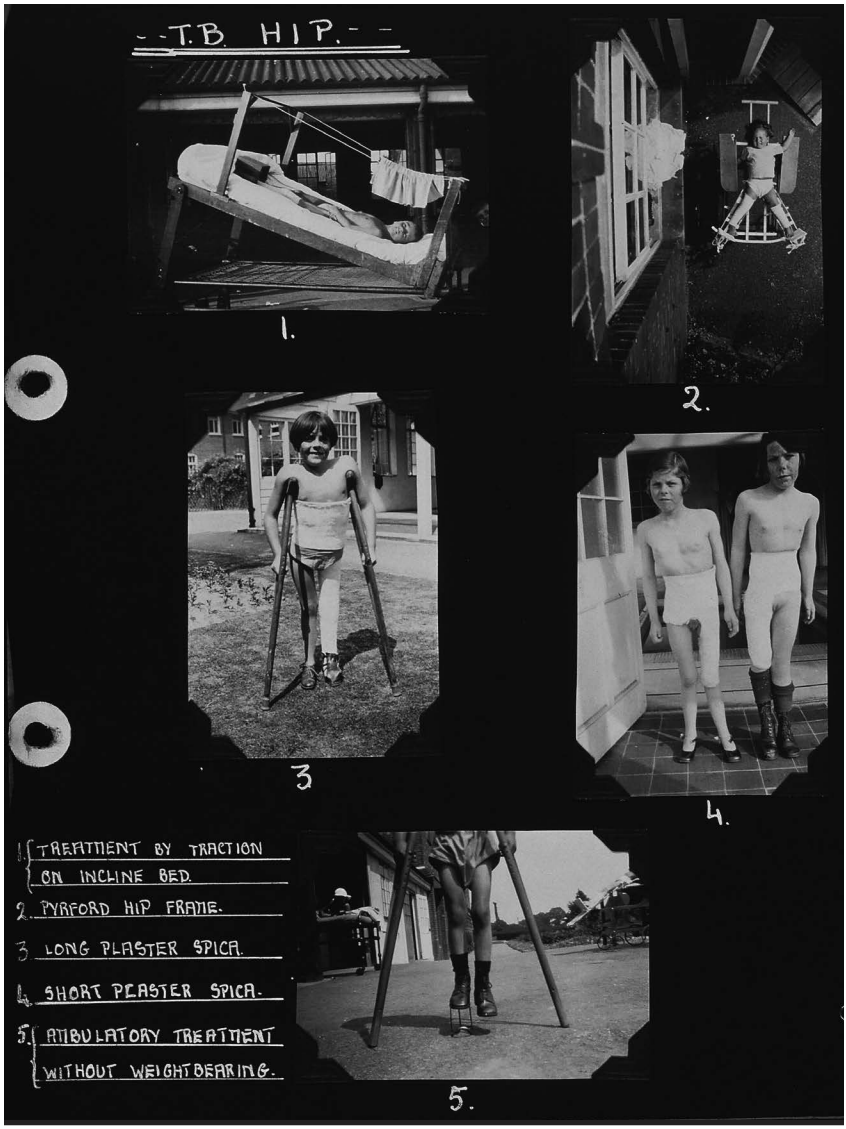
As the disease attacked the tissue and bone of Harry's joints, pus-filled abscesses frequently formed. These were often located deep in the hip joint or pelvis, which made them hard to identify and access. Abscesses could also surface beneath the skin. The pressure they created often caused pain, and they were frequently accompanied by a high temperature. A localised abscess could lead to general sepsis if left undrained and, prior to the widespread use of antibiotics, could be fatal.[45] However, abscesses were rarely aspirated unless they came to bursting point, because of the risk of secondary infection. As Dr Pattison said, 'He who opens a tuberculosis focus opens a door for death to enter.'[46]

The abscesses that burst naturally or were drained were packed with sphagnum moss. Local women and children collected the packing material for the hospital from the boggy moors above Sheffield.[47] Sphagnum bandages inhibit the growth of bacteria and produce a sterile environment by keeping the pH level around the wound low.[48] The moss had been used medicinally for centuries, including during the First World War. It was an ideal dressing because it absorbed up to 20 times its volume in liquid.[49]

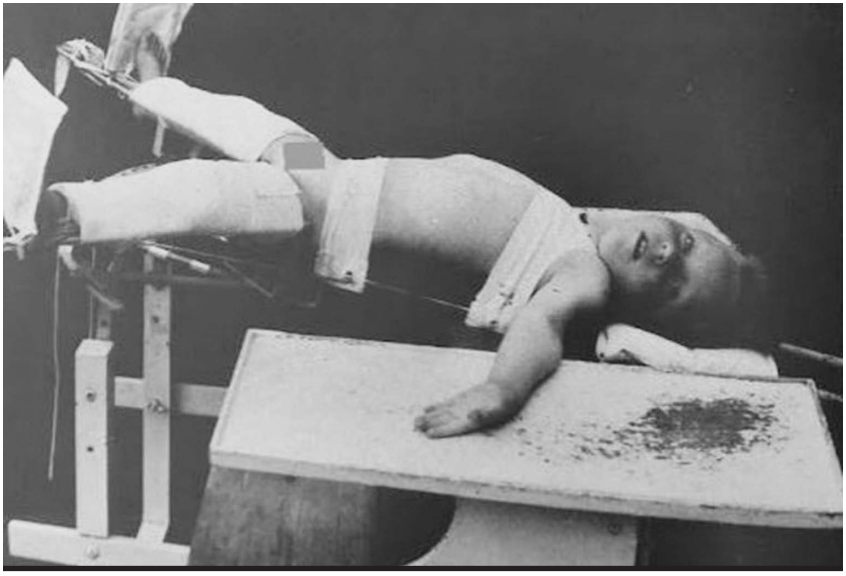
Before antibiotics, TB of the hip was treated with skilful splinting, traction, rest, sunlight, fresh air and good nutrition. The general aim was to reduce, as much as possible, the deformity caused by the infection. Although the understanding of vitamins and minerals was not greatly developed until the 1930s–1940s, cod liver oil had been given to TB patients in the 19th century.[50] The oil was also prescribed to Harry and the other patients at Rivelin, partly because Mrs May Mellanby, a medical researcher, and Dr Pattison were conducting studies to build evidence that cod liver oil reduced tooth decay in children.[51] It is rich in vitamins A and D and has added calcium and potassium salts, all needed for bone health.[52]

To relieve Harry's pain, maintain joint stability, and possibly improve future mobility, his hip joint had to be immobilised. He was first strapped to a Jones double hip-abduction frame (see figure 2). This fixed his legs in a triangular position for months.

After about nine months on the Jones frame, if X-rays suggested that movement in the hip might still return, then the patient was allowed either to move around in bed or to try sitting up in the ambulatory splint. However, the frame did not work for Harry.



TB hip. Short plaster spica. Wellcome Reference 29326i.[53]
The author has obscured the girls' genitalia in figure 4 as they had cut-outs in their plaster casts, leaving them exposed in the original photo.



A child in a Jones double hip-abduction frame with fixed traction to both lower limbs. Adhesive strapping kept it in place. When this apparatus is properly applied, it stops the hip joint from moving. *From* A History of King Edward VII Orthopaedic Hospital Sheffield *by E.G. Herzog, Orthopaedic Surgeon Emeritus, 1986, page 22 unpublished.*

Next, Dr Pattison ordered Pugh's method of slinging.[54] Harry's left thigh was put in traction and fixed to a bar at the foot of a tilted bed. 'The adhesive strapping must be very strong because the object of the method is to allow the child to wriggle constantly, like a fish on a hook; this keeps up the circulation in the muscles and their tone, and keeps the hip joint mobile in all the cases where this is possible; some have so much cartilage destruction before they come under treatment that it is impossible.'[55]

The rotation of Harry's hip was controlled by putting a light shoe or boot on the foot and nailing the heel to a wooden crossbar. This prevented the foot from twisting, or the hip from rotating. Harry's right leg was free, so that it did not atrophy, as it did when

bandaged on a frame. Hip traction helped to relieve hip pain and muscle spasm, to keep the joint as mobile as possible.[56]

It was imperative that Harry did not try to sit up, so the nurses tied him to his bed. 'A firm canvas restrainer across the upper part of the sternum and round the shoulders [was used]; this does not hinder respiration in any way.'[57] A contemporary of Harry's, Derek Godbehere, born in Sheffield in 1930, was admitted to the boys' ward of the King Edward VII Memorial Hospital for Crippled Children in 1936. He also experienced being strapped down and said *'I hadn't been in long, I'd got out of bed and couldn't get back in, my legs had gone. They put me back in bed and tied bandages around my chest and the bed frame. I was tied down, but I could move a little from side to side, but I didn't let on.'*[58]

After five months, Harry had a dislocated hip, so it had to be fixed in place. He was therefore encased in plaster of Paris from under his armpit down the full length of his body with holes to allow him to urinate and defecate. A bar between his legs kept the structure rigid.[59] It took more than a week to build up the cast.

Application of a plaster spica at King Edward VII Hospital – *Nursing Mirror* 1956 to commemorate the opening of new facilities. *From Jean Bruce's* King Edward VII 2008–2018. *Sheffield, 2018.*

Harry talked of his extreme vulnerability in this position. The smiling child in this photograph is likely displaying a trauma response to the situation. If you were suspended in mid-air being plastered and you knew you would remain immobile for months and were asked to smile for the camera, would you do so, regardless of how you felt? The feeling of betrayal by nurses and doctors Harry had been encouraged to trust was a lasting memory. He said:

> *They were doing their job, but there are ways of doing it. They weren't doing it as one should with a sick child. I didn't trust them anymore because I never knew what they were going to do to me.*

There were difficulties with body casts. An orthopaedic surgeon wrote: 'Plaster has the drawback of keeping light and air from the skin and inducing more muscle atrophy than a simple splint, which permits movement for a few degrees in any direction, sufficient to keep up some muscle tone. It is also heavy, and therefore less good for the general health of a patient who has been so long in bed.'[60]

Once in plaster, Harry was sometimes suspended above a hospital bed. The young trainee nurses (known as probationers) inserted bed pans in the gap between him and the mattress routinely after meals. Instead of toilet paper, his exposed bottom was wiped with tow linen fibre waste.

Early each morning, whatever the weather, a probationer pushed Harry's bed onto the purpose-built covered colonnade outside his ward for his fresh air treatment. Each bed was covered with

a tarpaulin when it rained or snowed. Sometimes the snow was a foot deep before it was removed.

A staged photograph of girls taking fresh air treatment at the King Edward VII Memorial Hospital for Crippled Children, *c.* 1920–39. *Licensed from ©Picture Sheffield (Image s07418).*

Derek commented: *'I was often on the veranda and even had snow on the bed. It was a different snow to nowadays, it wasn't wet. The nurses just shook it off from time to time. Once I complained of the cold. They put me on the ground and rolled me up like lino. I couldn't get my arms out. I didn't complain any more after that.'*[61]

Harry found it a joy to be outside surrounded by a myriad of trees: lime, larch, birch and Scotch fir, and oak, elm and sycamore.[62] Flat on his back, he could not see much of them, but he loved to listen to their 'rustling as they talked to each other'. Occasionally, a squirrel scampered over his bed.

Rest was believed to be a vital treatment, if it was 'enforced, uninterrupted and prolonged'.[63] The medical view was that 'just lying in bed is not resting … Resting is done with the mind as well as the body'.[64] Therefore, Harry and the other children were told not to talk to each other. Nor from the moment Harry was admitted to Rivelin was he allowed to feed himself. While he quickly learnt to swallow while flat on his back, he loathed being fed and the aversion stayed with him for life.

Once the TB infection appeared dormant, and the clinical and X-ray signs suggested steady progress of healing, Harry was taken out of the plaster cast.

Thomas splint applied with patten and crutches.[65]
From A Treatise on Orthopaedic Surgery by Royal Whitman. Out of copyright.

Children were believed to have recovered when they could fully move their hip (which was rare) or when the remaining bones fused. Staff carefully monitored them to be sure healing had taken place rather than a child being in a temporary dormant stage.[66] It was common for children to suffer multiple relapses.

Treatment was not Harry's parents' only concern. If the hip – or elbow – contained living tubercle bacilli, Harry could die suddenly from tubercular meningitis, a known complication of the infection.[67] Harry remembered with horror the sound of children's

screams being smothered when they were given a lumbar puncture without anaesthetic. It was done on the ward, without privacy screens. The procedure was used to diagnose and treat meningitis, but he did not know that at the time and he worried it would be done to him, too.[68] It can only be hoped that May and Harry Senior did not read the newspaper report of an inquest into the death of a boy not quite three years old, who had died of meningitis earlier at Rivelin.[69] Between visits, all they could do was to hope they would not receive a postcard that said Harry was 'seriously ill'.

King Edward VII Hospital. A staged photo showing some boys in bed on the veranda and other boys standing in a plaster Thomas splint, mainly using crutches. The child's unaffected leg was fitted with a patten to stop the child from inadvertently putting weight on the tuberculous joint. One boy has his arm in plaster.
Licensed from ©Picture Sheffield (Image w00567).

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It was edited and photographs added by Peter Dean. This history of King Edward VII Hospital was dictated by my father-in-law, the late Dr Eric Herzog at some time in 1985–1986, after he retired as Superintendent in 1972. I believe he intended it for publication and he appears to have selected a number of illustrations, which were referenced in the text. The only surviving copy is a typewritten version

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"Professor Mellanby has also been busy in Sheffield determining the value of vitamin A—an ingredient of some fresh vegetables—in checking disease. At Sheffield Royal Infirmary he and Dr. Roberts tested the effect on locomotor ataxy of vitamin A and carotene, which the colouring principle of carrots.

Other Sheffield researches last year included work by Dr G.A. Clark on the secretion of insulin in the human body, and Dr C.G. Imric with Dr Marion Brown on the part played by phosphorus in the muscles. Minerals such as phosphorus and iron are proving to be far more active and necessary in the human system than doctors used to think."

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